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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8745
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7619
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0104
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 1677
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 5907
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0866
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2036
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0157
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 7214
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHFMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BANGKOK 002746

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SUBJECT: THAILAND: THAKSIN'S LATEST MOVES SET THE TABLE FOR A (POTENTIALLY) TURBULENT NOVEMBER

REF: A. *vpQgQQugitive former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has indicated he will accept Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's invitation to visit Cambodia and possibly take a position as an Economic Adviser.

The move -- rumored to be planned for mid November -- promises to increase the stakes in Thaksin's effort to bring down the Abhisit administration, as well as exacerbate tensions between Thailand and Cambodia. In addition to signaling his intention to temporarily take up residence on Thailand's border, Thaksin used October 25 and 27 call-in speeches to red-shirt supporters to urge them to ratchet up their street protests in November. Taken together, the two

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related developments suggest that November is shaping up as the hottest month for the Abhisit administration since "red-shirt" mobs ran amuck in Bangkok and Pattaya in April. For its part, the RTG has vowed to try to extradite Thaksin if he follows through on his promise to go Cambodia.

¶2. (S) Comment: Thaksin's two-pronged strategy of simultaneously provoking the RTG with a planned move to Cambodia and reinvigorating the "red-shirt" street movement appears to follow the lack of results in the latest round of secret "reconciliation" conversations between free-lancing staffers associated with elements of the institution of monarchy and Swedish representatives of Thaksin. Similarly unproductive talks in the so-called "Swedish channel" occurred in early 2009, prior to Thaksin's decision to launch mass street protests in March-April. In announcing another campaign of pressure in November, Thaksin may once again have calculated -- with little apparent basis in reality -- that the RTG is teetering on the verge of collapse, with only one last push needed to send it over the edge. We will reach out to contacts in the red-shirt camp and urge them to stick to peaceful protests within the framework of the rule of law, eschewing the violence they employed in April. End Summary and Comment.

THAKSIN'S BOLD CAMBODIA GAMBIT

¶3. (C) Thaksin's old friend and reputed business partner, Cambodian PM Hun Sen, waded into Thai domestic politics upon arrival in Thailand for the ASEAN Summit October 23 with his public invitation to Thaksin to live in Cambodia and work as an Economic Adviser (ref A). Hun Sen further fueled the flames by drawing a comparison between Thailand's most famous fugitive and Nobel Prize Winner Aung San Suu Kyi, grouping them as fellow victims of military coups. Hun Sen's legal maneuvers initiated by the Thai government. Not surprisingly, Hun Sen's incendiary rhetoric created a frenzy of negative media coverage in Thailand and put Thaksin right where he wants to be: on center stage in the public eye. A number of reports suggest Thaksin plans to travel to Cambodia as early as November 10, the day Hun Sen is scheduled to return to Cambodia following the Mekong-Japan Summit in Tokyo.

¶4. (C) Thaksin's enemies in the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), a.k.a. the "yellow-shirts," quickly registered their anger with the Cambodian government by assembling approximately 100 protesters in front of the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok on October 27; they promised to take further action if necessary, with another protest planned the first week of November. The RTG responded

swiftly to Hun Sen's provocative remarks too, initially

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vowing to pursue his extradition back to Thailand, before later opting to ("phQD) z comments, in which he discussed the implications/consequences associated with hosting Thailand's most wanted man.

E.T. (EX-THAI) PHONES HOME

15. (C) Apparently not content to let the Cambodia bombshell stand on its own, Thaksin -- who no longer holds a valid Thai passport after his April calls for a "revolution" went unheeded, and is known to travel on a Montenegrin passport -- generated additional headlines this week with two separate call-ins to his core supporters. On October 25, Thaksin called-in to a meeting of over 1000 members of the "We Love Udon" group and urged them to increase pressure on the government. Thaksin labeled the current government as illegitimate and argued that democracy was disappearing in Thailand under an administration he claimed had little respect for justice and enjoyed limited credibility. Thaksin suggested that if elections were held tomorrow, his Puea Thai party would win over 50 percent of the votes and be able to form a government on its own. Towards that end, Thaksin called for the immediate dissolution of the Parliament and new elections. Thaksin urged his supporters to attend a November 20 "red-shirt" rally that he implicitly suggested would help trigger such elections.

16. (C) On October 27, in a call-in to another group of supporters, Thaksin continued his assault on the current administration. He urged his Puea Thai party colleagues to attend to the Thai people's needs and focus on winning the next elections. Thaksin further briefed his audience on Hun Sen's offer to allow him take refuge in Cambodia and suggested he might take Hun Sen up on his offer. Thai media coverage of this call-in, as well as the October 25 call, focused on Thaksin's overall appeal to supporters to increase the tempo and frequency of protests in an effort to pressure the government to call for new elections.

POSSIBLE BACKDROP - SWEDISH GAMBIT STALLS AGAIN?

17. (S) Since the advent of the Abhisit administration in late December 2008, we have heard persistent stories from various sources of attempts by Thaksin and intermediaries to broker a deal directly with the Abhisit government, on the one hand, and indirectly with presumed intermediaries from the institution of the monarchy, on the other. A first round of such attempted discussions, in January-February and involving Swedish Social Democrats associated with the Olaf Palme KQNa\+p-ivate Secretary told us in September that all such efforts on Thaksin's behalf were being rebuffed (ref B).

18. (S) Nevertheless, such talks apparently resumed mid-year, and continued from July-September, again without result. Two Thai figures associated with elements of the monarchy and reputedly involved in such discussions, Tirawat Sucharitakul (an adviser to Princess Sirindhorn) and M.L. Anuporn Kashemsant (from the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary), confirmed with us in recent weeks that such discussions had taken place, in the spirit of promoting unity and reconciliation in honor of King Bhumibol. Both cited the lack of violence in the September 19 red-shirt rally as a sign of Thaksin's "sincerity." However, neither suggested there was any official negotiating mandate or deal in the waiting, merely the possibility of red-yellow

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cooperation in the future (Anuporn's expressed hope), or the need for "more flexibility from PM Abhisit" (Tirawat's conclusion). Thaksin is known not to have funded out-of-Bangkok travel for red-shirt rallies ford(9Qp9Bly

RTG PLOTS ITS RESPONSE - EXTRADITION

19. (C) The RTG has made it explicitly clear that the extradition process would begin immediately upon Thaksin's entry into Cambodia. Officials involved with preparations for the extradition request recognize that the process will be time and labor intensive, but they have vowed to pursue it. Atsadang Chiewthada, the Deputy Director General in the International Affairs Department in the Office of the Attorney General's office, told us October 28 that Thailand would initiate the request through the MFA; Cambodia would then be forced to consider the request according to the terms of the 1998 Extradition Treaty between the two countries.

10. (C) According to Atsadang, the high profile nature of any extradition undertaking would almost certainly complicate the process. Atsadang believed Cambodia would first look to Article 3 of the Treaty to determine whether Thaksin's case might be subject to immediate dismissal (i.e. for political cases), before determining whether to proceed. If Cambodia put the case to the courts, Thaksin could then decide whether to stay and fight the case in the Cambodian courts, or flee overseas again. In any case, Atsadang believed that, even in a best case scenario for the OAG's office, the case would take a number of years to work its way through the glacial Cambodian courts. Acting Government Spokesman Panitan Wattanayagorn told us separately October 28 that the government had not made any recommendations one way or another regarding Thaksin's case, but would simply allow the courts to proceed according to established legal procedures.

JOHN